The Chronicle and Index

OF THE UNITARIAN SOCIETY.

No. 9.] BELFAST, SEPTEMBER 1st, 1881, [For Gratuitous Circulation

ON 2nd August the children of Rademon Unitarian Sunday School with their respected minister (Rev. J. A. Kelly), teachers, and friends, had an excursion to Newcastle. On arriving there, lunch was served out on the sand banks in sight of the rolling sea. After a pleasant run along the beach, the children formed into marching order and proceeded to the beautiful grounds surrounding Donard Lodge—permission to enter same having been kindly granted by Lady Annesley. The march up hill was as far as the "shell-house," where a short halt was enjoyed. Then the procession wended its way downward to the park, where games of various kinds, and races for the children were entered into with great vigour. At the conclusion of the sports marching order was again formed. The procession started for the sand banks, past Donard Lodge, where three hearty cheers were given for her excellent ladyship. The sand banks being reached, refreshments were served out in the shape of buns, biscuits, lemonade, fruit of various kinds, and sweetmeats, and were thoroughly enjoyed by appreciative appetites. Train-time being near, march was made for the railway station, the carriages being entered, the excursionists proceeded home, evidently all well satisfied with their day's enjoyment. Several ladies of the congregation contributed very considerably to the success of the entertainment by supplying fruit and milk for the children. Hearty cheers on separating were given by the children for the Rev. Mr. Kelly and the members of the congregation who assisted him in carrying out the excursion. It is pleasing to relate that the Sunday School is now in a most satisfactory condition. The past year was attended with marked improvement.

We have received the Fifty-sixth Annual Report of the British and Foreign Unitarian Association. The volume furnishes a considerable amount of interesting reading in relation to our churches at home and abroad. We copy the following paragraphs of local interest:—

"The Jubilee of the Unitarian Society of Belfast has been recently celebrated, the Rev. H. W. Crosskey preaching on the occasion. At the various meetings which were held, a most enthusiastic spirit prevailed, and progress was reported of an encouraging kind. Mr. J. G. Eiloart, who attended at this Jubilee as the representative of your Association, was much impressed with the excellent spirit of the meetings, and the promise they seemed to give of good work in the future."

"Ireland.—Notwithstanding the unsettled condition of many parts of the country, and the agitation arising out of the Land question, our congregations generally have been fairly sustained during the year; and while in a few instances signs of weakness and decay are apparent, in others there are most gratifying evidences of revived earnestness and zeal. Most of our congregations are in small towns and scattered over rural districts, the bulk of the people being dependent on the produce of the soil for the means of support. A succession of unfavourable seasons has militated against farming interests, and the operation of the Land Laws, instead of giving relief, has only increased the burdens. Emigration has thinned the population. Families have removed from the country to Belfast and other towns in search of remunerative employment, and thus our rural parishes have been numerically and financially weakened. Many of our ministers have laboured on faithfully, in the face of much difficulty and with the slenderest support. All our congregations, except Bandon, Ballymena, and Carrickfergus, have at present settled ministers, and the pulpits of the three places named have been regularly supplied. In Belfast, our churches ably maintained their position; and the two Unitarian Societies, with their Depositories, supported by their respective adherents, report good work well done. The Jubilee of the old Society was made the occasion of a series of successful meetings. At Mountpottinger, the effort to clear off a debt on the building has happily realised the best expectations; a lease has been executed, and the church and school and connected institutions continue to prosper. At Hopeton Street, the services of the

missionary have been discontinued, but the Sunday-school is in a healthy condition. The Missionary Committee of the Non-subscribing Association at the last meeting were able to report that useful work had been done in various districts by the members, and the suggestion to establish a Mission Sunday was received with approval. If our congregations can be got to work together, and there is now a prospect of it, there is no reason why this mission agency should not help the best interests of all our churches. The reports presented at the meeting of the Non-subscribing Association on temperance, Sunday-schools, mission work and other matters, were the fullest and most interesting we have ever had, and there was a manifest desire for union and co-operation."

BOOK NOTICE.

Latter-day Teachers. Six Lectures by RICHARD ACLAND ARMSTRONG, B.A. London: Kegan Paul and Co.

We have much pleasure in recommending this volume to our readers. The "Latter-day Teachers" whom Mr. Armstrong brings under our notice are John Stuart Mill, Matthew Arnold, Theodore Parker, John Tyndall, and Canon Farrar. To Canon Farrar two lectures are devoted. In bringing Mr. Armstrong's book before our readers we cannot do better than give some selections from the Lectures.

Mr. Armstrong concludes his Lecture on John Stuart Mill as follows:—

"But there are in the breast of man inborn fundamental aspirations and fundamental trusts, needing logical form indeed, but transcending logic. Those trusts a false education may indefinitely weaken; their normal development it may indefinitely retard. A mean and self-indulgent life may entirely destroy them, so that when men talk of them it shall seem to the mean and self-indulgent that they talk of dreams or lies. But while a man lives nobly, however distorted his creed, however one-sided his mind, those trusts, crushed, denied the light, discredited, can never wholly die. And when the great educator, Sorrow, touches the noble with her benignant wand, then, in spite of the intellectual drilling of a life-time, those holy trusts and aspirations will blossom into life, however faded, however feeble, and strive, though with broken stalks, to lift their fragile flowers to the light. The persuasions of the Holy Spirit will move the man, though with wavering and trembling hope, to look for light upon the mystery of birth, to look for light upon the mystery of death, to feel for divine love upon the present mystery of life. And so it was that Mill at last was able to lift pleading eyes to the heavens above, and to lay his listening ear upon the earth beneath, if so be he might behold the face and hear the solemn footfall of the Eternal God. And in that new mood, wrought out of a sanctifying sorrow, he was able too to stretch out his hand to Christ, and to write those beautiful words concerning Jesus, even feeling, as he says, that this man *might* indeed bear 'unique commission from God to lead mankind to truth and virtue.'"

The following are the concluding words of Mr. Armstrong's lecture on "Matthew Arnold:"

"We cannot love a stream of tendency. We cannot thrill with loyalty to a Power of which we know not whether it be blind or sees, whether it live or is a mere motion of ultimate atoms, whether it love or is cold as steel to all the voice of our entreaty; we cannot thrill with loyalty to that, even though somehow it make for righteousness.

"And love and the thrill of loyalty are needed, if conscience is to be stirred into power for the redemption of the world. If conscience is to be enthroned—which we have seen to be the consummation of all most needful—conscience must be known and felt as the living voice of the Living God. If it be but the wavelet of a stream of tendency, if it be but a vibration of an unknown power, making, perhaps blindly and unconsciously, for righteousness,—then it is doomed to be feeble evermore; and the world will diligently Hellenize, and all its Hellenizing will never bring it to the steadfast recognition of the imperial claim of righteousness declared with such persistency by the rude old Hebraism of Israel. But if conscience be the voice of a Living God, and that God can win our fealty by His felt and redeeming love; then conscience can never fail in the world of men, faint though here it sound, and unheeded though there it be; but it shall more and more lead men on to that increasing sweetness, and light, and life, and sympathy, which constitute the New Jerusalem, the eternal kingdom of the Eternal Father who makes indeed for universal righteousness."

We take the following paragraphs from the Lecture on Theodore Parker :—

"It is the same man" (Theodore Parker) "that stands on the platform of his church on the Sabbath Day; a man with whom hardly a preacher in America will exchange for a Sunday's duty, because he is so 'vehemently deistical,' has set himself to 'subvert Christianity as a particular religion.' Before him the largest congregation in Boston—the largest congregation that ever assembled in the world to hear a gospel unpledged to creeds, unbound by tradition of Church or book. This vehement deist, this subverter of a particular Christianity, rises to read from an ancient record that he loves, the olden story of one who was condemned to death and wore a crown of thorns, and men mocked at him and spat on him, and they bid him to carry his cross, and behold! he could not, and they set the cross up on Calvary, and they crucified him. He rises to read that record to his people, and the pathos and the sadness of it overcome him, and he breaks into weeping, and he must needs sit down; and he rises yet again to read it all before his people, and the tears blind his eyes, and the emotion chokes his voice again, and he can in nowise read his people that story which thousands of most Christian clergymen that every day read through with never a thob at the heart."

"'Vehemently deistical,'—'subverter of Christianity as a particular religion.' I know not what his accusers meant by deism,—but if they meant that faith which glowed in Parker's breast—which he called not Deism, but by the kindred name of Theism—that God is the Ever-present Ruler of the world, permeating and moulding every grain of matter, and penetrating and sustaining every human soul, shaping the outward universe to beauty, and conversing spirit to spirit with his prayerful children,—then may God send that faith victorious over the paganisms, the orthodoxies, the atheisms that divide the world. I know not what these men meant by the name Christianity. But if they meant the faith that thrilled the soul of Jesus and made him mightiest and tenderest among all the sons of men, the faith that wrapt Paul in its strong fervour and sent him spreading the kingdom of God from East to West, then that was the very faith for which Parker lifted up his prophet-voice and gave his great martyr-life, in a land where the God that was preached was the patron of the slave-driver, and the Christ that was followed bade no man visit the sick or clothe the naked if his skin were black—a land whose Bible was clasped with bloody manacles, whose gospel was an eternal hell. There Parker preached his Theism out of the depths of his own spiritual life; there he taught his Christianity; there he proclaimed his Absolute Religion,—a Religion with its roots in Man and its crown in Heaven."

In his Lecture on "John Tyndall," Mr. Armstrong in a criticism of the Agnostic theory says :—

"And when we are thus persuaded that, after all, this condemned 'theistic hypothesis' or sup position of a God, is the only possible hypothesis or supposition which will tally with the astounding facts of science, that science herself, when her language once is plainly understood, is destined to prove the very hierophant of God, proclaiming Him with a voice which none shall be able to gainsay; why, then once more the unnatural strain is taken off our minds, and all the sweet experiences which have ever been the assurance of unscientific men, of humble sons of toil and gentle women, reassert their message, and rekindle faith in its shining beauty. Then once more we feel the strength that flows into us in prayer, the peace past understanding that steals upon the soul which seeks its proper rest, the inspiration to noble strife that comes of communion in the lonely chamber. And these experiences and such as these renew their rightful hold upon our minds, as plain manifestations of God as a present Being, ever ready to help and bless and save. Once more we know how right were prophets of the pre-scientific day, when they thought that God Himself breathed into them the holy thought and bade them declare it to the people. Our natural converse with our Father is restored; the world is no longer the anvil on which clash and clang blind and relentless forces, but shines all beautiful with the sheen of the divine presence, the divine energy displaying itself in every rippling breeze and every growing flower; and these fellow-men of ours seem no longer piles of molecules moving over each other with mindless pertinacity, but living souls reflecting the light of the infinite God, who is their eternal Source."

The fifth Lecture is on Canon Farrar's "Life of Christ," and in this Lecture Mr. Armstrong has the following passages :—

"Yes, Jesus is safe. He is not man's making. Prophecies and miracles may perish; they are the creatures of the human mind, the products of man's untaught imagination. But no poet in inspired dream, no seer in the rapt moment of his ecstasy, ever imagined a Jesus of Nazareth. All these dreams woven of human fallibility fade away as the nineteenth century wakens the eyes of men to the daylight of science and philosophy. But before our waking gaze, majestic, beautiful, stands Jesus, unmoved though there fall from him those gorgeous trappings which we saw wrapped around him in the visions of the night. Jesus is no dream. He is the reality which has winged the New Testament, and taught it as a well-aimed dart to find lodgment in millions of transfixed hearts. Jesus is no dream. Him those poor, honest, ardent, faulty apostles and primitive disciples could not dream. Out of the atmosphere of human thought and sentiment in that credulous age were bodied forth angelic annunciation, miraculous conception, bread and fishes multiplied a thousandfold, a divine figure pressing its feet upon stormy waters that were solid to its tread, a herd of two thousand swine maddened with the devils expelled from a human bosom, the darkening of the skies about the sombre cross, the rent all down the awful veil that covered the holiest spot on earth from human eyes, the restless walk of startled saints upon the earth, roused from their graves by the dying cry of the crucified Son of God. But Jesus, the Son of man, was beyond the scope of human thought or sentiment to body forth. As an imaginary picture, he utterly surpassed their skill. As the subject of realistic portraiture, he was greater than they knew how to paint. We have perfect, infallible assurance of the reality of Jesus, of the reality of the example which he set, of the reality of the precepts which he gave, of the reality of his own sublime manhood and exquisitely balanced character, in the absolute impossibility of men such as his disciples, on their own showing, were, evolving such an example, such precepts, such a character, such a Man, out of their own unaided consciousness."

"And you, the Englishmen and Englishwomen of to-day, profess yourselves the disciples of this being, be he man or God. Let that controversy rest. They say that we who hold him pure and simple man are infidels. They utterly deny our claim to the Christian name. Well, let that be. Perhaps we have no claim. Perhaps we are in the wrong. Perhaps they are right who cry before the Christ, with Thomas in his passion of amazement, 'Ah! my Lord and my God!' Let that be. You profess to be his disciples. You asseverate that he has the words of eternal life. And do ye the things that he said?

"The things that he said! Good heavens! Disciples of Christ? My God! In the Temple ye cry 'Lord! Lord!' But in the home, in the shop, in the street, in the mart—what heed pay ye there to his words? Some much, some little, some none! Christian people! Christian England, with its jostling commerce marred and broken by its frauds, its drinking, its personal selfishness, and its fist lifted almost every day to smite, no man knows for what, some weakling prince of Asia or of Africa, and pour into his villages and fields the Christian civilization of iron and powder and blood! Christian Europe, each state with jealous eye upon its neighbour; no statesman trusting his brother statesmen; people hating people, and huge armaments glittering with flashing steel and gaudy banner, while the rich look on indifferent, and the poor groan beneath the tyranny! Is it to account for THIS that you want your miracles? Is THIS the consummation brought about in eighteen hundred years by God incarnate in the image of a man?

"How long, O Lord, how long? Once there breathed a brother of our own in whom dwelt that wise and lovely spirit which alone can cleanse the world, and lead it forward into the Kingdom of God. Other men have caught glimpses of that spirit too, and laboured, and prayed, and died. But the great world with one voice has proclaimed that strong and gentle brother of ours the Mighty God, has doomed to eternal fires all who bowed not at his name, and then turned greedy to its lusts and wickedness. Lord! multiply the men with somewhat of the spirit of thy wise, thy tender, thy loving Jesus; and so still the cry of the oppressed, and hush the cruel clang of arms, and bring to earth at last the beautiful kingdom of heaven!"

The last Lecture is on Canon Farrar's "Life and Work of St. Paul." Mr. Armstrong concludes this Lecture with these words:

"The work which Paul did was to save the spirit of the Gospel of Jesus, which, so far as we can see, might have perished with Jerusalem, but for him, in the lurid fires of conquering Titus. He planted that Gospel, enlarged from the form in which the primitive Apostles held it, in all the great capitals of Asia and of

Europe. He gave it scope, breath, freedom; and he fused into it his own mighty power of faith and love till he had made of it a heritage for the modern world. If Christ be the mediator through whom mankind has come to God, Paul has been the mediator through whom nine-tenths of Christendom have come to Christ.

"And the world has never ceased to have need of apostles of righteousness like glorious Paul. Wherever the blow is struck for freedom of thought and supremacy of conscience, there breathes the spirit of Paul. Wherever the spirit is loved more than the letter, and tradition gives way to the breath of the Holy Ghost, there beats the heart of Paul. Wherever bonds are bound around men's minds, wherever iniquity sits in high places, wherever the dead letter crushes men beneath its superincumbent weight, there the flash of Paul's gleaming eye, and the thrill of Paul's pleading voice, and Paul's intrepidity and faith and love, are needed to redeem suffering humanity."

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Our shadow from the world's fierce glare;
Our solace in all woes.

O Light Divine, all light excelling,
Fill with Thyself the inmost dwelling
Of souls sincere and lowly.
Without Thy true Divinity
Nothing in all humanity—
Nothing so strong or holy.

Wash out each dark and sordid stain,
Water each dry and arid plain,
Raise up the bruised reed;
Enkindle what is cold and chill,
Relax the stiff and stubborn will,
Guide those that guidance need.

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SAY was it to my spirit's gain or loss,
One bright and balmy morning, as I went,
From Liege's lovely environs to Ghent,
If hard by the wayside I found a cross,
That made me breathe a prayer upon the spot,
While Nature of herself, as if to trace
The emblem's use, had trail'd around its base
The blue significant Forget-me-not?
Methought, the claims of Charity to urge
More forcibly, along with Faith and Hope;
The pious choice had pitch'd upon the verge
Of a delicious slope,
Giving the eye much variegated scope;—
"Look round," it whispered "on that prospect rare,
Those vales so verdant, and those hills so blue;
Enjoy the sunny world so fresh and fair,
But"—(how the simple legend pierced me thro' !)
"Priez pour les Malheureux."

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